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The Duties of religious Societies considered,

IN A

S E R M O N

Preached at the

O R D I N A T I O N

Of the Rev. PHILIP TAYLOR,

At LIVERPOOL, June 21st.

And of the Rev. ROBERT GORE,

At MANCHESTER, August 23d. 1770.

By the Rev. WILLIAM ENFIELD;

W I T H

An ADDRESS on the Nature of ORDINATION;

By the Rev. RICHARD GODWIN;

Mr. TAYLOR's and Mr. GORE's ANSWERS
to the QUESTIONS proposed to them;

A N D A

C H A R G E,

Delivered on the same Occasions,

By the Rev. PHILIP HOLLAND.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 72. St. Paul's Church-yard.

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MDCCLXX.

HEBREWS XIII. 22.

I BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, SUFFER THE
WORD OF EXHORTATION.

THE office of the christian ministry is of real importance to mankind; and the character of a christian minister, when properly supported, is truly worthy of esteem and respect. We do not, indeed, claim that kind of reverence, which superstition and ignorance have in all ages been accustomed to pay to ecclesiastical authority. We pretend not to take upon us the office of public religious instructors, by an immediate commission from heaven; or to have received our investiture and authority from the hands of holy men, to whom this extraordinary power is supposed to have been transmitted, by an uninterrupted succession, from Christ and his apostles.

apostles. We desire no superstitious homage, no implicit faith, no servile obedience. But neither, on the other hand, can we apprehend that the character in which we appear, or the duties which belong to our station, are such as deserve to be treated with ridicule or contempt.

As christian ministers, our business is, to stop the progress of ignorance and error; to discourage superstition; to promote useful knowledge; to reprove the vices of the age in which we live; to lay open the secret springs of folly and wickedness in the human heart; to awaken and preserve in the minds of men a just sense of the importance of virtue; to remind them of the extent and variety of their obligations, as rational beings, members of society, creatures of God, and disciples of Christ; and in a word, to employ all the powers of eloquence, and all the influence of good example, for the advancement of wisdom, virtue, and happiness among mankind. Is there any thing ridiculous, any thing contemptible, in such an employment as this? Or, till ignorance and vice are banished out of the world (which from present appearances we have little ground to expect) can it with
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any shadow of reason be pretended, that such an employment is unnecessary, or that those who are engaged in it are a burden to society.

It may perhaps be asked, What actual advantages is derived from the institution of this office? I answer; much every way. By the public forms of devotion, a sense of religion, and a regard to the providence and government of Almighty God, are preserved in the minds of multitudes, who, without this institution, would perhaps soon forget, that there is a Power above, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. By the public lectures of instruction, men become acquainted with many important subjects, to which they would otherwise pay little attention; are reminded of faults in their characters, which would otherwise pass unnoticed; and receive frequent impressions in favour of virtue, which may reasonably be presumed to have a happy influence upon their conduct. And private advice and admonition, supported and enforced by a good example (both which are necessary to complete the character of a christian minister) have doubtless, in numberless instances, been of important service to mankind.

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Nor could these ends have been so effectually answered without the actual appointment of an order of men, whose immediate business it should be to conduct the public devotions of religious societies; to deliver discourses on the great subjects of religion and morality; and to perform the other duties of the ministerial office. To discharge these duties with propriety and advantage, requires a variety of peculiar accomplishments, and a degree of attention, which can scarcely be expected, but from those who have passed through a suitable course of preparatory studies, and have devoted their time and abilities principally to this object.

But after all, though public religious worship is in itself reasonable; though the appointment of an order of men to conduct it is expedient; the actual success of the christian ministry must greatly depend upon the diligence and fidelity of those by whom this office is undertaken. On this account it is highly reasonable, that they should, at proper seasons, be reminded of the nature and importance of the character which they have assumed, and exhorted to take heed unto themselves and to their ministry, that they be
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found faithful: and it is with great propriety that this is made one principal part of the business of ordination.

It should, moreover, be remembered, that christian societies have also their duties; and that much depends upon the manner in which these duties are performed. You will not therefore think it an improper use of the time allotted for this part of the present service, if I remind you, my christian friends, of the duties which are incumbent upon you as a religious society, and urge upon you an upright and constant attention to these duties.

“ I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word
“ of exhortation.”

Suffer me, in the first place, to exhort you, to maintain a proper sense of the importance of religious institutions, and to be regular and constant in your attendance upon them.

It is a just ground of surprise and of lamentation, that indifference to the instrumental duties of religion is daily gaining ground amongst us. Whether it be that, in proportion as knowledge increases, men are apt to
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pride themselves in calling in question the most obvious and important truths, and in treating the most sacred obligations as matters of trifling consequence; or whether the foolish and absurd practices of enthusiasts, have induced the more thinking part of mankind to neglect even rational religion itself: whether it be, that the love of amusement hath so far captivated the hearts of men, in this age of luxury and dissipation, as to render them incapable of being serious in any thing but their pleasures; or whether the concerns of business and the pursuit of wealth have so far engrossed their attention, that they "care for none of these things:" or lastly, whether it be that men are too wise to be instructed, and too good to be made better: to whatever cause it is owing, the fact is certain, that places of public worship are not so regularly and constantly attended as formerly, and that great multitudes entirely "forsake the assembling of themselves together" for the purposes of devotion. If our forefathers erred in laying too much stress upon the external forms of piety, we are gone into the opposite extreme, and treat them with culpable indifference and neglect. If their characteristic faults were enthusiasm and hypocrisy, ours are irreligion and licentiousness.

ness. So little are men at present governed by the genuine principles of piety, that the most trifling engagements of business, or the smallest enticements of pleasure, are sufficient to divert them from paying their public tribute of homage to the Maker and Lord of all. I would not be uncharitable; but from the prevailing taste and manners of the age I cannot help suspecting, that if the generality of mankind were not more powerfully influenced by a regard to their reputation and character, than by a reverence for the Almighty, the house of God would by this time be well nigh forsaken.

Guard yourselves, my brethren, with the utmost care against the contagion of such examples. Esteem it not a proof of good sense, or a mark of a liberal turn of mind, to trample upon the sacred obligations of religion, and to violate "the first and great commandment." While you have any mercies to acknowledge, any sins to confess, any virtuous habits to acquire or strengthen, or any need of support and consolation, say not, "It is in vain to serve God; and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" Till you are wise beyond all danger of being misled

led by ignorance or prejudice, and good beyond all possibility of farther improvement, think it not a useless employment of your time, to "watch at wisdom's gates, and wait at the posts of her doors." "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not."

Let me exhort you, secondly, to entertain just apprehensions of the nature and design of the several parts of public worship, and reasonable expectations from your ministers, with respect to the manner in which they should be conducted.

It is doubtless the design of those religious exercises which are immediately devotional, to give us an opportunity of expressing, in a public and solemn manner, those pious sentiments, which it becomes us to maintain and cultivate towards the Supreme Being. Now, since this is the case, it is evident, that nothing should be admitted into public prayers, which is not immediately fitted to awaken these sentiments; and that *our* sole object in conducting them should be, to express the genuine feelings of the pious mind, in plain, natural, unaffected language. If therefore you expect that your ministers, in their public
forms

forms of devotion, should attempt to amuse your imaginations with philosophical descriptions of the perfections and works of God; to entertain you by the elegance of their composition, or the delicacy and refinement of their sentiments; to gratify your love of novelty by an endless variety of thought and expression; or even to inform your judgment, and give you useful lessons of instruction; you expect what would be foreign to the nature and design of public worship, and unfriendly to your improvement in a religious temper and character. Every thing of this kind can only serve to divert your attention from your own immediate and proper business in acts of devotion, which is to worship your Maker. While you are amused and entertained by the sentiments, language, or manner of the person who leads your devotions, it is scarcely possible that you should yourselves be properly devout. Let me therefore recommend it as a matter of great importance, to acquire clear ideas of the nature and design of public worship, and a just taste with regard to the manner in which it should be conducted. Remember that public devotions can only be beneficial to you, so far as they enable you to express and cherish the sentiments of

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genuine piety; and learn, to consider those prayers as the best and most useful, which you can with the greatest ease and advantage adopt as your own address to the Almighty; and to esteem those the most judicious conductors of your devotions, who fix your attention, not on themselves, but on the great object of your worship.

With respect to those discourses, which usually accompany the public exercises of devotion, let me exhort you, to remember that the principal design of them is to promote the practice of virtue and religion, and to judge of their merit solely by their aptitude to answer this great end.

Many persons, who pretend to be perfectly acquainted with christian doctrines, and profess a great zeal for the true christian faith, imagine their own system of belief so essential to the honour, and the very existence of christianity, that they esteem it the principal business of ministers, to avow and support the several articles of *their* creed; and hear sermons with no other view, than to judge of the preachers orthodoxy, and to be confirmed in their own opinions. There are others, who entertain

entertain confused, mystical, and enthusiastical ideas of devotion, and who suppose it to consist in a succession of supernatural impressions, and vehement emotions, which they can neither understand themselves, nor explain to others, but which however they honour with the title of *experimental religion*. These think all discourses dry and insipid, which do not rise above the level of common sense and real life, and furnish entertainment for their wild and disordered imaginations. On the other hand, there are not a few who, having, by a little accidental reading and consideration, fully convinced themselves of the absurdity of many opinions which are generally received, and acquired a taste for subjects of critical enquiry and speculation, think it the great business of christian ministers, to oppose vulgar errors and prejudices, and to establish a rational—that is their own—system of opinions, in their stead. By such persons as these, no discourse is heard with pleasure, or spoken of with applause, in which the preacher doth not display his zeal against error; explain some controverted text of scripture in favour of his own system, inculcate some new and unpopular opinion, or discover uncommon refinement and depth of thinking.

Now all these, however widely they differ from each other in judgment and taste, agree in treating plain discourses on the most obvious topics of practical religion and morality with indifference. In their estimation, a sermon, which attempts to establish no particular system, and discovers no critical skill, in which the preacher contents himself with inculcating, in a plain and familiar address, duties which every one acknowledges himself bound to practice, is scarcely worthy of an attentive hearing.

But let me appeal, my brethren, to your understandings, let me appeal to your feelings, whether such discourses do in reality deserve that neglect and contempt, with which zealous of all persuasions and sects have affected to treat them. Is not virtue the proper happiness of human nature? Can any object be conceived of greater importance, than to discourage and restrain the progress of vice, to establish pious and virtuous affections, and to promote right conduct, among mankind? Was not this the great end, for the accomplishment of which our Saviour Jesus Christ both lived and died? Do not men continually need to be reminded of their duty, and urged

urged by every possible motive to the practice
 of it? Do not addresses of this kind (to
 make use of *Lord Bacon's* phrase) "come
 home to men's business and bosoms?" Are
 they not directly adapted to make those who
 attend upon them useful members of domestic
 and civil society, upright, kind and generous
 in their transactions with their brethren, sober
 and discreet in the government of themselves,
 and pious and devout towards Almighty God?
 And is not this of infinitely greater impor-
 tance than to make them able disputants, ju-
 dicious critics, or even sound believers? Re-
 quire not, then, such things from your minis-
 ters, as they apprehend would be inconsistent
 with the nature of their office, and with a
 proper attention to your most important in-
 terests. Entertain not so low an opinion of
 them as to imagine, that they will attempt to
 gratify your taste, or to establish their own
 reputation, at the expence of their usefulness,
 and your real improvement. Expect not,
 that they will meddle with opinions and sub-
 jects of debate, any farther than they are of
 evident importance as springs and motives
 of action; or that they will neglect the cul-
 tivation of your dispositions and manners, for
 the poor satisfaction of moulding your judg-
 ment

ment by their own. Rest satisfied, if in imitation of the example of Christ, and in conformity to the true spirit of the gospel, they make it the great business of their public discourses to exhort you, “to deny ungodliness and “worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and piously in this present world; “looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our “Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Suffer me, in the next place, to exhort you, my brethren, to attend upon religious institutions, with proper dispositions, and with a sincere desire of improving in piety and virtue,

For this purpose, let it be your first care, to perform the duties of religious worship with attention and seriousness. If, instead of worshipping your Maker, or hearkening to the voice of instruction, you suffer your imaginations to rove through scenes of amusement or business; or indulge yourselves in indecent levities of behaviour; or give way to an indolent and drowsy indifference to the duties in which you pretend to be engaged; what can the most judicious and rational forms of devotion, or the most instructive and pathetic addresses,

addresses, on subjects of the highest moment, profit you? How can it be expected that a prayer, or a discourse, which cannot find its way to your understanding, should penetrate your hearts, or influence your behaviour?

But it is not sufficient that in religious duties you be serious and attentive; it is likewise of great importance, that in the several parts of these duties, the power and affections of your minds should be properly employed.

In public devotions, it is your duty, not only to hear and understand the prayers which are delivered, but to address them to the Almighty for yourselves, as expressive of the real sentiments of your hearts. Every individual should perform the acts of religious *adoration*, with lively emotions of veneration, love and joy; those of *thanksgiving*, with the genuine feelings of gratitude for the mercies which he hath received; those of *confession*, with a humble recollection of his faults, and serious resolutions of amendment; and those of *petition*, with a sincere desire of the blessings he supplicates, a devout sense of his dependence upon the Almighty, and a benevolent concern for the happiness of his fellow-creatures.

creatures. How far these pious sentiments do actually accompany your public devotions is known only to God, and your own consciences. I presume not to charge you with the neglect of your duty, in an affair which cannot come under human cognizance. I trust you have a witness in your own bosoms, that it is your sincere desire, and habitual care, to worship your Maker in spirit and in truth. It cannot, however, be improper that you should sometimes (and especially on such occasions as these) be reminded, that no religious service can be either beneficial to yourselves, or acceptable to Almighty God, where the heart is a stranger, and that it is only "the fervent prayer of the righteous man, which availeth much."

In like manner, it is of the utmost importance, that you should attend upon public religious instruction, with right views and intentions. Esteem it the principal end of hearing sermons, that you may be made better by what you hear; and desire to be entertained, or even instructed, by pulpit-discourses, only so far as shall be consistent with, and subservient to this great end. It is, indeed, a circumstance extremely desirable, that a preacher's composition and address should be such as
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are adapted to engage the attention of his audience, and to give them pleasure. Simplicity and elegance of style, and a natural, easy, and graceful delivery, are accomplishments which cannot fail of being highly agreeable, especially to persons of refined taste and liberal education. And it would be unreasonable to expect, that those who attend upon preaching should be wholly inattentive to the ornamental qualifications of a public speaker. But to make these incidental circumstances the principal object of attention; to come to places of public worship, chiefly in hopes of being entertained by the preacher's sentiments or manner, and with a view to admire and applaud his rhetorical powers; is to make an improper and unworthy use of the seasons devoted to the purposes of religion, and to sink the preaching of the word of God to a level with theatrical entertainments. That this is a prevailing fault in the present age, too plainly appears, from the terms in which sermons are generally applauded or censured; from the eagerness with which those preachers are followed, who excel, or are generally said to excel, in oratorical accomplishments; and from the indifference and neglect with which the best and most useful discourses are com-

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monly heard, when they happen to be delivered with an improper tone of voice, or to be accompanied with awkward and ungraceful gestures. You will not therefore deem it impertinent or unseasonable, if I take the liberty to caution you against this fault; and to exhort you, not to seek for pleasure at the expence of your improvement. Imagine not that the great end of preaching hath been answered, when you have been for a few moments entertained or amused; but be desirous that every discourse you hear, may make a good impression upon your minds, and produce the fruits of righteousness in your lives. Attend upon public discourses, to be reminded of your duty; to acquire the knowledge of yourselves; to establish the principles of religion and virtue more deeply in your hearts; to learn greater circumspection and prudence in the conduct of life, and to improve in all the branches of a pious and virtuous character. And remember, that, how much soever you may be amused or even instructed by the sermons you hear, till these great ends are answered the word preached hath not profited you. "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

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Let me farther exhort you, to promote as far as you are able, the peace and happiness of the religious societies to which you belong, and the interests of religion in general. If public worship be in itself an important duty, and highly conducive to the public good; every man is bound to do his part towards the support and success of religious institutions. Among the various ways by which this may be done, it is none of the least considerable, that a decent provision be made for the comfortable subsistence of those who are employed in the ministerial office. It is evidently the duty of all who attend upon public worship to contribute, for this purpose, according to their ability—a duty which ought not to be placed upon the same footing with acts of beneficence and charity, and which cannot be neglected without a manifest violation of the laws of honour and equity. But it is as unnecessary, as it would be indelicate, to dwell upon this topic,

I therefore proceed to exhort you, from a regard to your own improvement, as well as to the happiness of your ministers, to treat them with that degree of candour, affection and respect, which is due to their character,

and their office. While they claim no superstitious reverence from you, and exercise no priestly authority over you; while they discharge the duties of their office with fidelity, and are free from all just ground of censure in their private character, "esteem them highly
 "in love, for their virtues and their works
 "fake." If they sincerely declare to you what appear to them to be important truths; though their opinions may not in every particular agree with your own, give them an attentive and candid hearing. If they faithfully remind you of the folly and danger of a vicious course; if they venture to insist upon particular vices, of which they apprehend some of their audience to be guilty, or upon particular duties in which they think them defective; be not offended at the plainness or freedom of their address. Nay, if they sometimes take the liberty to perform the difficult task of private admonition, advice or reproof; treat not their faithfulness and affection with resentment or neglect; think not that they intrude into affairs in which they have no concern: but remember that both the nature of their office, and their personal friendship for you, require them to embrace every opportunity,

nity, whether public or private, of promoting your moral and religious improvement.

With regard to their conduct in private life, remember that they are men of like passions with yourselves, and expect not from them a degree of perfection, which is inconsistent with the condition of humanity. If their general character be amiable and respectable, make charitable allowances for trifling foibles, or occasional failings. While they keep within the bounds of innocence; preserve themselves from that excessive love of amusement and pleasure, which would give them a habit of indolence and dissipation, and indispose them for the duties of their office; and support a manliness, decorum, and gravity of behaviour, suitable to their station; be not offended if they sometimes indulge themselves in those entertainments or exercises, to which their disposition and taste may incline them. Lay no unnecessary restraints upon the conduct of your ministers, and require not from *them* that preciseness and severity of manners, which you think *yourselves* under no obligation to observe.

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Farther to promote the interests of the society to which you belong, cultivate mutual good-will and brotherly love. Sensible that nothing would so effectually prevent your pleasure or improvement, in your attendance upon religious institutions, as disaffection and alienation of heart one towards another ; avoid as much as possible every occasion of strife and contention. Let not interfering interests in life ; let not different opinions in religion, create jealousies, debates, and animosities among you. Be always ready to sacrifice your private taste, opinions, or interests, to the public good. Since you are partakers of the same nature, disciples of the same master, and fellow-worshippers of the same God ; “ love as brethren, and endeavour to preserve the “ unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.”

In fine, Let your concern for the honour and interest of religion extend, not to your own society alone, but to the world in general. Consider yourselves as related to all those who rank themselves under the denomination to which you belong, to christians of every sect and profession, and to good men of every religion and country under heaven. And cheerfully contribute your part, towards the defence

defence of religious liberty, the progress of useful knowledge, and the establishment of pure christianity, and true religion, in the world.

Suffer me, in the last place, to exhort you my brethren, to support a character agreeable to the profession which you make, and the advantages which you enjoy. You acknowledge yourselves believers in God, and disciples of Christ. You are, from time to time, reminded of your religious and christian principles, instructed in the several branches of your duty, and urged to the practice of it by the most interesting motives. May it not therefore justly be expected from you, that you should excel in every thing that is amiable and praise-worthy? After such professions, and with such advantages, it is surely reasonable, that you should be distinguished by your pious regard to the providence of God in all the concerns of your lives; by your chearful submission to his appointments; by an upright, benevolent, and generous behaviour towards your fellow-creatures; and by the habitual regularity and sobriety of your manners. A conduct thus innocent, virtuous, and exemplary, mankind have a right to expect

pect from you, as a testimony of the sincerity of your religious profession; your ministers earnestly desire, as the most acceptable reward of their labours, and the surest support of the interests of religion and christianity in the world; your Maker enjoins, as the best expression of your subjection to his authority, and your gratitude for his mercies; and your own interests, both in this life and that which is to come, absolutely required. By your regard to the good opinion of your brethren; by your esteem and affection for your ministers; by your zeal for the cause of Christ; by your reverence for the authority of God; and finally, by your concern for your own welfare; "we therefore beseech and exhort you, that, "as ye have received of us how ye ought to "walk and to please God, so ye would a- "bound more and more."

Mr. *TAYLOR*'s
A N S W E R S
TO THE
Q U E S T I O N S
PROPOSED TO HIM AT HIS
O R D I N A T I O N.

W. TAYLOR

W. TAYLOR

TO THE

W. TAYLOR

W. TAYLOR

W. TAYLOR

QUESTION I.

WILL you please, Sir, to favour us with your views of Religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular?

ANSWER.

I shall most willingly comply with your request, and shall endeavour to give the best answer I am able to the important question you have now proposed. But first of all I must beg that you, and all who are here present, would observe, that I neither mean, by what I am now about to say, to impose my views of things upon any man as the unerring standard of truth, nor to debar myself the liberty of changing my sentiments in any future time, when they may appear to me false and ill-grounded. As I am determined in no instance to put the least restraint upon the consciences of others, so likewise am I resolved,

'till the end of life, to make use of that liberty which nature hath given me, and in which the gospel commands me to stand fast, of forming my own sentiments, and of altering or rejecting those sentiments, whenever scripture or reason inform me that I am mistaken.

It appears to me, beyond the possibility of a contradiction, that there does at present exist, that there hath existed from, and will exist to all eternity, a supreme intelligent being, possessing every great, every amiable, every adorable perfection. By him, I am fully persuaded, were all things created that are in heaven or in earth; and the more I contemplate the works of nature; the more I consider the noble provision which is made for the comfort and happiness of the various animals that inhabit this earth; the more thoroughly am I convinced that the great being, who brought this goodly frame into existence, is possessed of unrivalled power, of unfathomable wisdom, and of boundless benevolence. And as, beyond all doubt, the divine being is possessed of these glorious attributes, it appears to me that there are various important duties which every reasonable creature owes to the great parent of the universe; that it is incumbent
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on every man to worship the fountain of all excellence; to cherish the most ardent love and esteem for him; humbly and chearfully to trust in him; to obey his commands to the utmost of his power, and to imitate him as far as human frailty will permit.

I am fully persuaded, that it is the intention of the great governor of the universe to make all his rational offspring good and happy; that to execute this noble design, he hath implanted in the breast of every man a principle to be his counsellor and his guide, in all the actions of his life, strongly impelling him to cultivate piety towards God, to observe the rules of temperance and sobriety, and to behave with justice, sincerity and candour, towards his fellow creatures. I have also the strongest reason to suppose, that the divine being exercises a moral government over his rational offspring, and that it is the design of his providence, even in this world, to lead the vicious to infamy and punishment, and to crown the virtuous with honour and happiness. And though this design does not at present seem compleatly accomplished, yet I regard it as a glorious truth, that men of firm integrity and unaffected piety do, upon the whole, enjoy a greater

greater degree of present felicity, than men of profligate abandoned manners. With the same noble intention of advancing the virtue and consequently the happiness of mankind, the divine being, I am convinced, hath inspired the whole human race, even the most barbarous nations, with the pleasing expectation of a future state, where good men shall reap the reward of their perseverance in the ways of rectitude. And though the arguments in support of this joyful hope do not amount to demonstration, yet I believe that it hath had the happiest effect upon the world in general, and that in all ages it hath proved the strongest bulwark of virtue.

But, notwithstanding these advantages, it is evident from history, that mankind have forsaken that path of duty, which the light of nature pointed out to them, and paid divine honours to the meanest created beings; and that almost an universal depravity of manners hath prevailed in the world. Our merciful creator saw and pitied the degeneracy of the human race, and when the fulness of time was come, sent his well-beloved son to be the Saviour of mankind. The holy scriptures, which I regard as the divine oracles of wisdom, inform me, that,

that, at the appointment of God, and in compassion to the human race, Christ Jesus left the bosom of his father, and took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh; that he himself took our infirmities, and was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin; that he came to preach the gospel of peace, to call sinners to repentance, and to reveal a future state of rewards and punishments; that it was not his intention to destroy the law of nature, but to confirm and fulfil it; that he went about doing good, and that he hath left us an example that we should follow his steps. By the same sacred writings I am taught to believe, that, Jesus Christ, having led a life of unspotted virtue, was, at length, by the malice of the Jewish people, put to a most barbarous death; that he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our sins; that he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God; that for our justification he was raised again from the dead, and that being received up into glory, and sat at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, he maketh intercession for us. These I regard as the most striking particulars of the religion of Jesus, and from which, as a Christian I cannot withhold my assent.

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The miracles which our blessed Saviour wrought, as recorded in the histories of the four Evangelists, were in themselves so evidently supernatural ; performed in so public a manner ; so well attested, and of so benevolent a kind, that I cannot but consider them as a demonstration, that he truly was the Son of God. But so high a veneration do I entertain for the gospel revelation by Jesus Christ, that I should not scruple even to venture to rest its whole evidence, upon the apparent tendency which it hath to advance both the present and eternal interests of mankind.

These are my views of religion in general, and of christianity in particular. I profess myself a believer in all the fundamental principles of religion ; I glory in the Gospel of Christ ; I reverence the great truths which it contains ; and whilst life and health continue, I will defend it against the attacks of calumny and ridicule, to the utmost of my power.

Q U E S T I O N II.

What are your sentiments of the christian ministry, and your views in undertaking the office of a christian minister ?

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A N S W E R.

I am fully persuaded that the appointment of a christian ministry, to conduct the public worship of God, and to preside in the solemnities of our most holy religion, is of the greatest advantage to society in general. It is, I apprehend, in a very great measure owing to this wise and excellent institution that any reverence for religion is kept alive in the world; that the knowledge and practice of those duties which we owe to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves, do at all prevail among mankind.

My own private views in entering upon the christian ministry may be comprized in a few words. I can honestly say, and I hope I have no reason to be ashamed to say, that I have undertaken the office of a christian minister, because ever since I arrived to years of reflection, I have entertained a full persuasion, that in this station of life I should be most happy myself, and most useful to others. Nor have I ever seen reason to alter this persuasion. I do therefore desire to be dedicated in a more solemn manner to the service of God, and of this congregation. And it is my sincere purpose,

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pose, to do whatever lies in my power, towards advancing the interest of piety and virtue in this christian society. To this end I shall endeavour to persuade those who attend upon my ministry to a holy and religious life, by every powerful motive I am able to suggest. Uprightness and integrity I will place in the most amiable light I possibly can; vice, prophaneness, and immorality I will represent in the most odious point of view, as the sure and certain conductors to infamy, ruin, and eternal perdition. Subjects of controversy and speculation I shall cautiously avoid, being thoroughly convinced, that they never can be made subservient to the cause of true religion, and that under pretence of informing the judgment, they too often corrupt the heart. And as the intention of my public discourses shall always be, to make those who hear them better men, and better christians, so I hope my example will not contradict my instructions. Far am I from proposing myself as a pattern of perfect virtue. I am conscious that, in common with other men, I have my failings and imperfections. I humbly hope, however, that God will favour me with his assistance and direction; that he will guide me through the snares and temptations of youth;

youth; that he will make me an instrument in his hands of promoting the interest of real piety, of genuine christianity, and of uncorrupted virtue.

QUESTION III.

What is your opinion of the dissenting interest; and what are your reasons for engaging in the ministry among the dissenters?

ANSWER.

It is my fixed opinion, that every person is entitled both by nature and by the Gospel; both as a man and as a christian—to think for himself in matters of religion; to form his own sentiments, and to worship his Maker, in that manner which appears to him to be most agreeable to reason and scripture. In these things, I am persuaded, no civil magistrate has any right to interfere; in these things, I apprehend, every man is accountable only to God, and to his own heart. The liberty of private judgment in religious concerns, I consider as one of the chief and noblest privileges of human nature; as a privilege sacred and unalienable; as a privilege, which no temporal magistrate can

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take away or restrain, without being guilty of the highest tyranny and presumption. These principles, I am convinced, are abundantly sufficient to justify any man, in a dissent from the established religion of his country, when that religion appears to him in any important respects contradictory to reason or scripture; and it is upon these principles alone that I shall always vindicate myself in declining to become a member of the church of *England*, as by law established. But though I profess myself a hearty friend to the dissenting interest, I cannot, however, omit the present opportunity of declaring, that I do by no means approve the conduct of those of my own persuasion, who take a malicious pleasure in continually exposing the defects of the religion of their country, and in pouring out uncharitable censures against those who support and defend it. Such a conduct as this, I am persuaded, can answer no good purpose. Whilst I enjoy the advantages of a toleration; whilst I am permitted without molestation to worship God in the manner I most approve; I shall think myself bound by the laws of candour, of moderation, and even of gratitude, to refrain from saying, or doing, any thing which may give unnecessary offence to the professors
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of that system of religion, which the laws of this kingdom have countenanced and established. I am a dissenter — I engage in the ministry among the dissenters, because I cannot give my consent to many of the fundamental principles of the church of *England*; and because the mode of worship, which is used among that class of dissenters, to which I have chosen to unite myself, appears to me, on the whole, to be most agreeable to the dictates of reason, and the spirit of uncorrupted christianity.

I shall now take the liberty to address myself, in a few words, to this religious society, to which I consider myself as standing in the important relation of a christian minister.

You have heard me declare in a most solemn manner, that I shall devote my best abilities to your service; that I shall make it my endeavour to advance the interest of religion in this society, by every means which lies in my power. I am not ignorant of the importance of the office I have undertaken, or of the difficulties attending it. Nor can you be ignorant, that there are some duties which, as your minister, are due from you to me. You
have

have heard them explained and recommended in such a manner, as I hope will make a lasting impression upon every one of you. God grant that we may long be happy in each other; that you may be disposed to reap improvement from my services; that I may fulfil the important duties of my station with fidelity, diligence and propriety; and that, in that awful day, when we must all appear before the Sovereign Judge of mankind, we may find, to our mutual joy, that *you* have not *heard*, and that *I* have not *preached* in vain.

Mr. GODWIN's
ADDRESS
ON THE NATURE OF
ORDINATION;
WITH
Mr. GORE's
ANSWERS
TO THE
QUESTIONS
PROPOSED TO HIM.

MR. GORDON'S

A D D R E S S

ON THE NATURE OF

ORDINATION;

WITH

MR. GORDON'S

A M S W E R S

TO THE

COUNCILS

PROPOSED TO HIM

MY BRETHREN AND FELLOW-CHRISTIANS;

AS the Rev. ROBERT GORE is lately become a stated minister, by the choice and appointment of this Society of Protestant-Dissenters; we his brethren, take this opportunity, at his request and theirs, to give him our advice and best wishes, and contribute our part to render him useful and happy, in the situation in which providence hath fixed him.

We take hold also of such opportunities as these to remind ourselves, and any of our societies, who may be present, of the duties of christian ministers and christian people.

Great pains have been taken to shew, that Ordination is of Divine Authority, and to prove its obligation from scripture. But concerning the subject, considered in this light, I shall not speak absolutely; only that this ar-

gument is attended with some difficulty, and does not appear to all with equal evidence. It is not however necessary, I apprehend, to our joining in the present service, that we should every one of us have exactly the same sentiments of this religious practice. Nor, indeed, can there be long any uniformity, in this or other disputable points, but in the bond of ignorance or hypocrisy.

Without directly contradicting therefore this high notion of the practice, permit me to fix it upon a foundation, which I would hope to be the less exceptionable, in general, because it is the more catholic. Allow me here to indulge some latitude; and consider Ordination, at this time, as a voluntary act of public worship, usually performed soon after a person has devoted himself to the christian ministry, and accepted of an invitation from a christian society, to settle with them as their stated minister.

If this view of the subject be right, as far it goes, it surely will not offend any, who mean by it something more. And I cannot help entertaining some expectation, that it may perhaps pass with the most nice and delicate persons,

persons, who have hitherto objected against the practice in every form. I will in all charity hope, that their scruples have, in general, arisen from a tender conscience, and an extreme fearfulness of superstition; though possibly, in some instances, it may have been owing to an affectation of singularity, and a determination to object promiscuously against all ancient and generally received religious customs. But, what objection can lie against Ordination, upon the footing on which it now rests, and in the manner in which of late it hath usually been practised among us? None, I trust, but such as would hold good against all public worship. And this, surely, would be a boldness too daring for our freest spirits to own, and attempt to vindicate.

After this undisguised explanation of the service in which we are now engaging, and artless apology for it; let us, my brethren, endeavour to perform it with religious dispositions and views ourselves, and to conduct it in a rational and liberal manner before the world; proceeding all along with friendship towards each other, and with moderation and charity towards our fellow- christians of every denomination.

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There are two things, which we should now be more especially careful to avoid; *superstition*, and the *affectation of human authority*.

We may easily stand clear of all suspicions of the *former*, when we declare, as I now do for myself, and will also, with all confidence, for my brethren here present, that we pretend not to impart extraordinary gifts and graces, or to perform any thing miraculous in this service; but are willing to rest the practice, in part indeed upon the custom of past ages, but chiefly upon its own propriety, and good moral tendency.

It is presumed also, that we guard sufficiently against the *usurping of undue power*, if we disclaim (as we constantly do upon these occasions) all human authority in religious matters.

Fellow-Christians! we do not summon this our young brother before us, as if we had formed ourselves into a synod or council, to act decisively either as to his faith or conscience. We desire only to appear as his friends and brethren, in performing at his request and yours, the religious services of public prayer
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and instruction. He is, I trust, already a christian minister; otherwise what we are about to do cannot make him one. We pretend not to give him any particular privileges. The ministerial function, especially amongst us, is not a trade; nor has it any exclusive rights, which the body may transfer or withhold at pleasure. We have no charter for these things; and to talk and act as if we had one, is unjust, nay, I must add, that in our instances it is imprudent; for we have no power to guard such usurped privileges. What we are about to do, is not to admit our young brother into an office, or to settle him in his church, or to communicate to him any new powers whatsoever. In a word, we give him no commission to do, for the future, any thing, which he had no right to do before. If he have performed with general acceptance (as I believe he has) the greater and more arduous parts of his public work, I cannot think that he wants either qualification or authority to do the less.

The way, my friends, is open to the ministry amongst us. Long may it continue so! For, methinks, it is better to leave room for ignorance and ill-desert, in a few instances, to creep

creep in, by means of our general liberty, than that ability and integrity should, through the influence of private opinion, and uncharitable censure, be *ever* shut out. Our investiture, settlement, and commission, are the invitations of our people, and our own acceptance of them. Theirs, brethren, is the right to choose, and to reject their ministers too, if there be occasion. Nor is this, or what immediately follows, to be understood as having any reference to particular cases. It is a truth, which we are glad of every opportunity to acknowledge to our people, and which, I think, comes with peculiar propriety, upon these occasions, from us to them. Let us not deceive ourselves, nor endeavour to conceal the truth from them; but declare and assert their privileges as well as our own: liberty and true religion may hereby gain no inconsiderable advantage. I grant that this implies some degree of dependence upon our people: but it is such a dependence as, if we have a proper zeal for our duty, will not make us slavish, mercenary, or temporizing; and we have need of every motive to stir us up to diligence and fidelity.

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This may be thought bold and dangerous. But what hath been said is, I apprehend, a truth of some importance, which may be safely trusted with its own consequences. Nor is the danger much, in our age, and especially in *this* country : for, I think, wise and good ministers are here, in general, almost secure of as much respect, as is due to their characters and services ; and if any be ambitious, oppressive, or scandalously immoral, why should they not suffer the neglect and infamy which they so justly deserve ?

As to the *Imposition of hands*, it is not I apprehend, generally considered, by us here present, as essential in this service. But if it be understood only as a public act, by which we express our united approbation of a christian brother in the ministry ; for my own part I have not the least objection to it. Besides it is a practice, which hath been transmitted from the primitive christians to this time, and is now continued naturally, like other customs, by the force of imitation and habit, though the primary ends and uses of it may have undergone some alteration. But, after all, it is merely a ceremony, which hath been much too eagerly contended for by one set of per-

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sons,

sons, and too warmly objected to by some others; who have hereby given it an apparent and imaginary importance, of which it was otherwise hardly capable.

The truth is, that the Dissenters have been long famous for two kinds of disputes; one, with those of a different denomination, the other between particular members in their own body. Some, with cool temper, civil demeanor, and strong argument, have stood forth as the bold and steady champions of our common liberty. While others have wasted their time and talents, soured their temper, and injured their character, by attempting to defend certain opinions and modes, which are hardly worth a dispute, and which should long since have been left, peaceably to rest among things of comparative indifference: and yet, in behalf of these they have been severe and unwearied, urging ancient practice, in the room of precept, reason, or any other substantial argument.

O for an able and animated address to the whole body of Dissenters (written with decency and moderation, with perfect command of temper, with good manners, and without the least

least severe and illiberal treatment of our brethren of the establishment) to call us back from trifling controversies to our true and once avowed principles; to collect our scattered members, and cement us together on the broad and immovable foundation of liberty and charity! Let it suffice, at present, to express our best wishes for so desirable an event; leaving it to time, and zealous, honest and unanimous endeavours, to accomplish it.

Thus I have attempted to place Ordination upon a liberal foundation. Our principal reasons for the continuance of the practice are, that the public concurrence and approbation of ministers on these occasions is a satisfaction to the people; and that our prayers and instructions may, by a natural consequence, make a good impression upon each of our minds.

It hath been usual for the person to be ordained, to give a *confession of his faith*: and I fancy ordination was, for many years, a test of religious opinions, or the means of introducing into the ministry persons of a particular set of principles, and excluding the rest. But all such ungenerous views and practices

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are,

are, I hope, at an end amongst *us*. May they cease to the end of time!

AND now, Sir, give me leave to address myself to you. After what hath already been said, you will not surely look upon me as an inquisitor, appointed curiously to search into your private notions. Whatever they may be, they are, I trust, the result of free and diligent enquiry, and they are an affair entirely between God and your own conscience. Something, however, you may say, before this audience, with respect to religion and liberty in general, and your own particular views as a protestant - dissenting minister, which may be of importance to yourself, and agreeable to us all.

Let me then request it of you, if you please, Sir, to give us your views of religion in general, and of the christian religion in particular.

A N S W E R.

S I R,

After the very rational account, which you have given of the nature and design of this service, I must acknowledge that I can undertake

take my part of it with much greater pleasure, than I once expected. Having always, from principle, professed myself an enemy to superstition, and always endeavoured, in consequence of that profession, as far as lay in my power to remove every the least appearance of it; I had formerly, I must confess, no small objections to this ceremony of Ordination. When I observed, how generally it was mis-understood, and how unscriptural and irrational the sentiments of most christians concerning it were, the continuance of it appeared to me little better than an encouragement to ignorance and superstition: Having, however, an opportunity sometime ago of hearing your sentiments upon this subject (which you have now likewise publicly declared, and by which every avenue to superstition is, I hope, sufficiently guarded) I can no longer hesitate to give you an honest and faithful answer to those questions, which you have been pleased to propose to me. I would only beg leave to premise, that I would by no means have it considered by any who hear me, that the sentiments, which I now deliver, are entirely free from error: or, that either they or myself are under any obligation constantly to adhere to those opinions, which we
now

now entertain. I am so sensible of my own fallibility, and at the same time of that liberty, which reason allows, and christianity confirms, that I would neither be entangled myself in the yoke of bondage, nor would I pretend to have dominion over the faith and consciences of others.

The belief of the existence of a deity, I apprehend, Sir, to be the foundation of all religion. This belief I derive from an attentive survey of the universe around me. When I contemplate the frame of nature, and observe the beauty, order and consistency of the several parts of it, my mind is necessarily led to the perception and belief of an original designing cause; a being, who is possessed of every possible perfection—possessed of a mighty power, unerring wisdom, and unlimited goodness. I am naturally led to believe, that the happiness of his creatures is the grand end of all his operations; that he pursues this end by the wisest means; and that he will so adapt the circumstances of things, that every one shall, sooner or later, receive the recompence due to his own conduct.

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From considering these perfections of God, and from surveying the imperfections of man, I farther perceive that there are certain *duties* obligatory upon the latter to the former. When I consider the Deity as my Creator, Preserver and Benefactor, the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things, I esteem myself under an obligation, at all times, to venerate and love his character; and more especially to set apart stated seasons, wherein, by decent and solemn acts of public and private devotion, I may celebrate his perfections, acknowledge his goodness, confess my own ingratitude and unworthiness, and testify my approbation of his government and laws, my chearful dependence upon his providence, and my humble confidence in his mercy and loving kindness.

From the same source I likewise derive obligations of another kind. From considering the nature and perfections of the Deity, and the nature and circumstances of mankind, I perceive myself in duty bound to imitate and resemble him in my temper and behaviour towards my *fellow-creatures*. Being sensible, that we are all formed with like capacities and powers, that we are all the children of the same benevolent parent, and that a disposition

position and endeavour to promote the general happiness is the only way, by which the mind of man can be united to its Maker, I esteem myself obliged to observe the duties of *social life* ; to be just, honest, benevolent and charitable to all mankind.

And, whereas the due and regular discharge of these duties depends in a great measure upon the temper and conduct of a man's-self, there appears to arise from hence a third kind of obligation, called *self-government* ; comprehending the virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and industry.

Moreover, besides these truths, which are chiefly *practical*, I deduce others, from the light of nature and reason, of a *speculative kind* ; which, however, have the most intimate connection with religion and virtue. The truths I refer to are the pardon of sin, the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of rewards and punishments in a future state. With respect to the first of these (the pardon of sin) I am sensible, when I reflect upon the goodness of the supreme benefactor, and the ingratitude of those who are the objects of his favour ; when I reflect upon the purity and perfection

fection of the divine nature, and, on the other hand, the imperfection of the human nature, I am sensible, that we are justly obnoxious to the displeasure of the Deity. Nevertheless, when I consider the frailty and imperfection of man *in connexion* with the character of God, as exhibited in the gracious works of his hands, and in the merciful administration of his providence, I cannot help being filled with the warmest hopes, that the sincere penitent will be the object of his forgiving mercy. Setting the argument in this light—considering God as always perfect, man always imperfect—it must, I think, be natural to conclude, that the righteous governor of the universe would never place his subjects under any constitution, which did not make the most gracious allowances for their nature, situation and conduct. And, if a perseverance in sin be the means of incurring divine displeasure, a departure from sin must, for ought that I can conceive to the contrary, be the means of obtaining divine favour.

The other truths I mentioned, as deducible from the light of nature, are the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of future rewards and punishments. I confess

I do not seek satisfaction in these important articles, by having recourse to any *metaphysical* arguments. These always appeared to me involved in clouds and darkness. But I rest the proof of them upon what are generally called the moral arguments: such as that fond desire of immortality, and that boundless curiosity, which are natural to the human mind; the strength of the benevolent affections; the universal dictates of conscience; the inequality in the conditions and circumstances of mankind; and the moral perfections of the deity: these are to me convincing proofs, that nature itself

——— “points out an Hereafter,
“ And intimates Eternity to Man.”

They convince me, likewise, that there will be a future state of Retribution.

These, Sir, are my sentiments of *Natural Religion*; of that religion, which the God of Nature hath established in the hearts of men.

Nevertheless, though we may, from the mere light of reason, deduce these important truths, yet I acknowledge it my happiness, and it must be acknowledged to be the happiness of mankind in general, that these truths are confirmed by the Gospel-revelation. Though every man, in his natural, undepraved

ed state, may be satisfied from himself concerning the different branches of his duty, and may arrive at some degree of certainty concerning those important truths already mentioned; yet, unless these duties be enforced, and these truths be confirmed, there is great danger lest they become so obscured, that even the traces of them shall scarcely be perceived. That this hath been the case is evident from history: that this was the case, when Jesus Christ appeared in the world, is an undeniable fact. Here, then, appears the expediency of a revelation; here appears the usefulness and excellency of the christian revelation, adapted to the state and circumstances of mankind not only in that age but in every other; adapted to make men wise, virtuous and happy. This revelation I receive as the voice of God to Man. I believe in God the Father, who sent his well-beloved Son into the world. I believe in Jesus Christ, the instructor and saviour of mankind. The miracles, which he wrought; the doctrines and precepts which he delivered; and the example, which he exhibited, all conspire to convince me, that he was a Teacher sent from God; that never man spake like him; and that his witness is true.

This, Sir, is my opinion of Religion in general, and particularly of the Christian Religion.

QUESTION II.

What are your sentiments concerning the Protestant Dissenters, and your views in entering upon the Christian Ministry amongst them?

The Protestant-Dissenters, Sir, I regard as the friends of religious liberty. I vindicate my dissent from the Church of England upon these principles; the right of private judgment, and liberty of conscience. Reason and scripture seem to concur in asserting these rights. If, in matters of importance, I tamely submit to the guidance of *others*, to think and act as *others* are pleased to determine, I apprehend that I give up the privilege of reason, since the understanding of a brute is *thus far* sufficient for his direction. And if I acknowledge the power of any church to decree rites and ceremonies, and to impose articles of faith, I give up that liberty, wherewith Christ hath set me free; I deny him to be the supreme head and governor of his church; and I suffer an encroach-

encroachment to be made upon the rights of conscience, those unalienable rights, which cannot be parted with, upon any compact or agreement whatsoever. Upon these principles I vindicate my dissent from the Church of England, as established by law. Nevertheless, I am sensible, that these matters may appear in a different light to others of my fellow-christians. To them I willingly allow that liberty, which I take myself. Nor am I afraid or ashamed to profess, that I highly disapprove of the conduct of those, who are continually inveighing against establishments in general, and drawing odious comparisons between the members of the Church of England and the Dissenters. I am well persuaded, that they greatly injure the cause they mean to serve; and that their conduct in these respects will answer no better end, than laying a foundation for enmity and uncharitableness amongst different parties of christians. Whilst I am permitted to worship God according to the dictates of my own conscience, and publicly to avow my religious sentiments, I shall account myself happy; nor shall I ever think meanly or uncharitably of those, who can conscientiously subscribe to articles of faith. I entertain not the least doubt, that there are many
such;

such; and, so long as they faithfully discharge the duties of their office, I shall esteem them as brethren, as fellow-servants of God and Jesus Christ, and be careful to give none offence. I would endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

As to my views in entering upon the Christian Ministry amongst Protestant-Dissenters, they will not, I trust, be thought mercenary, by those who consider how little opportunity Dissenting Ministers have of obtaining wealth and power. My intention — I speak from the heart — is to promote the best interests of my fellow-christians, both in this world and that which is to come; by urging every motive, which reason and christianity suggest, to excite them to the practice of virtue.

With this view, I enlist myself into the service of Christ. With this view, I determine to employ my best abilities in performing amongst *you*, my christian brethren, the duties of the ministerial office. I am well persuaded, that, while my addresses to you are dictated by such motives, they will be heard with attention and candor. I am well persuaded, that you will

will sincerely improve the institutions of religion to the important purposes, for which they were appointed. I, therefore, close my part of this service with expressing a chearful hope, that I shall have the satisfaction to see you daily improving in all christian virtues, that we shall long continue to be happy in each other in this life, and hereafter be happy for ever in the kingdom of heaven.

May God, the great fountain of happiness, grant this, for his mercies' sake in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

C O N C L U S I O N.

You have now, Sir, made such a declaration, in public, as appears to be worthy of a man, a christian, and a protestant dissenting minister. I have no more to add, but ; Go AND DO LIKEWISE.

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 group to the important purposes, for which
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CONCLUSION

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 AND DO LIKEWISE.

T H E
C H A R G E

DELIVERED BY

The Rev. PHILIP HOLLAND.

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C H A R G E

DELIVERED BY

The Rev. Philip Holland

C H A R G E.

TH E part of this day's service, which I am now entering upon, to give the charge or exhortation to my Reverend Brother, who has in this public manner devoted himself to the christian ministry, was undertaken with no small uneasiness; as it will be presumed, that a minister, who speaks on this subject, does in his ministerial conduct observe the rules which he gives; and so he may be thought to set himself up as a pattern, to be copied by the rest of his brethren. And the very circumstance of standing up in this manner, to charge or exhort a brother and fellow-labourer, carries in it so much of the appearance of superior wisdom and higher attainments, that he must be in the number of the wisest or vainest of men, who can undertake it without a sensible concern and distrust of himself.

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The subject indeed never struck me in this light, till I was called upon to consider it with a view to the present occasion. As often as I have been witness to the gravity, seriousness and wisdom, with which this office has been usually performed amongst us; I have attended with the highest pleasure, and, I hope, not without some improvement.

I would wish my present hearers, however, to remember, that the rules of an art may be recited by one who is himself no great proficient in it; and that in this, as well as the other parts of the ordination service, we disclaim every the least pretence to lord it over the faith of a christian brother, or to dictate to him as to the conduct of his ministry. And my worthy friend, for whose use this discourse is designed, will consider it as meaning nothing else, than to hint a few particulars to his consideration: and to recommend the observance of them, as far as they shall appear agreeable to his own views of the nature and design of the christian ministry.

The subject is too extensive, to allow me to think of doing justice to every part of it on the present occasion; but it shall by my endeavour

deavour at least to omit no essential point, and to illustrate such as are of the greatest importance, so as to answer the design of this address.

I shall begin, Sir, with putting you in mind of what, I make no doubt, you will readily acknowledge; that the office, on which you have entered, is of the highest consequence; and, that the manner therefore, in which it should be executed, merits your most serious consideration.

The end of our office is no other than this; to form our fellow-creatures to the love and practice of all virtue, in order to secure them the approbation of the Almighty, and to prepare them for eternal life and happiness. And it is obvious, that to succeed in it, a great variety of knowledge is requisite, as well as a manner of communicating it adapted to the situations and capacities of those to whom it is addressed,

The natural endowments for this service are not so necessary to be enumerated on the present occasion: and yet, I cannot help expressing my earnest wish, that such alone might

be called out to officiate in the christian ministry, as discover a sound understanding, a disposition to those particular studies, which have the closest connection with the office, and a hearty desire to acquit themselves well in it, by promoting the best interests of those, to whom they minister. And you will excuse me, Sir, if I add, as it is said without the least design to flatter you, that it affords me no small pleasure to observe the qualifications, it has pleased God to give you for this purpose: and from the agreeable account we have had of your sentiments of the pastoral character, and of your views in wishing to support it, I shall hope for your attention to what I have to offer on the means of improving your abilities, and of employing them, so as shall be most conducive to your continued and increasing usefulness.

The part of a minister's character, which is most frequently considered, and which is doubtless an essential part of it, is that of a public speaker. And as the subjects on which he is to speak, are above all others momentous and useful, it is peculiarly desirable that a minister have all the qualifications, which are necessary to enforce and adorn them.

You

You have undertaken, Sir, to address yourself from time to time to your fellow-creatures on those duties, which have an intimate connection with their present and everlasting happiness; and, as far as you remember this, it will, I am persuaded, be your constant desire, and the subject of your fervent prayer to heaven, that you may omit nothing, which may recommend the study and practice of virtue and religion to their constant, highest attention.

You cannot but be sensible, how necessary it is, that you have clear, distinct, enlarged views of the subjects, on which you are to speak: and yet they are so many, and various, and several of them so difficult also, that they cannot be thoroughly understood without much study and application. The works and the word of God are the grand sources of this knowledge; and when these have been perfectly explored, and your mind is replete with the instruction, which they afford, then, and not till then, it is time to lay aside all further researches. The ample materials, which are therein contained; and the various instruments, which are necessary to this investigation,

tion, though well worth your particular enquiry, I must not stay to insist upon.

The study which merits the peculiar notice of every man, and more especially of a christian minister, is that of the principles and dispositions of the human mind; and in connection with it, such observations on human life, as will give an ample and accurate knowledge of the characters of men. It is to men you are to address the sentiments, with which your own mind is charged: it is men you are to convince, persuade, and influence: and your discourses are to be adapted to all the several characters of the men, with whom you are concerned; and if these things be considered, nothing needs be added to shew the use of such enquiries.

It will not be thought, I trust, an useless digression, if I add a word on the method of pursuing this master-science. It is chiefly, if not entirely, from your own fund that this knowledge must be drawn; from a close attention to the operations of your own mind, and from your own observations on the behaviour of men in the several stations of life. Books may afford you some assistance; yet
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from the particular views and prejudices of their authors, you will be in no small danger of being misled by them. And though in the pages of the wise and faithful historian, you may expect a just view of man, the subject of history; yet he also has his particular ways of delineating characters, and accounting for events; and thus all his instructions, excepting only the bare facts, which he relates, may be the reveries of a refined or whimsical understanding.

There is however a history, with respect to which this caution is unnecessary. The account we have in the new testament, of the doctrine and character of Jesus, and of his undertaking and offices, as it must be allowed to merit, will naturally engage the particular regard of a christian minister: and you will need no inducement, but what the careful study of this book will suggest, to stand up in its defence, and to support and enrich your own compositions on moral and religious subjects, with the facts and observations which it contains; and particularly with the example, which it exhibits to our imitation.

It was not my intention to be thus particular; but you will forgive me, brethren, if I am desirous to remind you all, as well as our brother, to whom the exhortation is addressed—I need frequently to be reminded of it myself—that the christian minister, should, as his health, and the other duties of his office will admit, continue through the whole of life, to seek those improvements, which study and enquiry will naturally produce, that like the prudent householder, he may bring out of his treasures things new and old.

But the knowledge, which a preacher has, however various, extensive and accurate, will be of little significance to the purposes of his ministry, unless he have also a proper manner of communicating it. Besides that he should thoroughly understand the subject on which he is to speak, he should, after viewing it on every side, be able to place it in that particular point of light, in which it will be most likely to command the attention of his hearers; and to make the best impression on their hearts.

He should study to clothe his sentiments in such language, as may give them all their force and beauty; as may procure
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them the easiest admission to the understandings of his people ; and contribute in the most effectual manner to their instruction, delight and improvement.

Nor is the manner, in which his discourse is delivered, below the regard of a christian preacher. It is more attended to, by the generality of our hearers, than the words, and perhaps than even the sentiments themselves. To prescribe any invariable rules on this subject is so nice and difficult an affair, that I chuse not to attempt it. It depends so much on taste and sentiment, that no directions can be given, which will not be liable to objection. And besides it ought to be varied according to the natural powers of the preacher, and the situations, and capacities of the hearers.

I am the more willing to pass this over on the present occasion ; as I am persuaded, our dear brother, whom I am called upon to exhort, from the views he has of the nature and design of the ministry, and the desires he has expressed of success in it, will be ever solicitous, that his subject, manner, voice, gesture may be suitable to the occasions, on which he speaks, and to the purposes, which

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will, I trust, be always uppermost in his mind. Endeavour, Sir, to acquire in your own breast a deep sense of the truths you deliver; and a full persuasion of their infinite concern to yourself and your hearers; and this will naturally form your style and manner; and, if it do not make them faultless, will give them that native grace, which will far surpass all the ingenious arts of the most accomplished orator. And if you have a friend, who has judgment to discern, and fidelity to point out to you the defects, which may still remain; admit him into your bosom, as the richest treasure you can possess; listen to his counsels; encourage him to favour you with his remarks; they will be of greater use to you, than all the rules of the best speakers the world ever produced.

But besides that you are to preach to your people, another part of your ministerial duty is to lead their devotions. And how peculiarly necessary is it to this service, that you have deep, lively impressions of the truths of religion on your own mind, and that you express them in a manner agreeable to their dignity and use! Your prayers, Sir, you will always consider as requiring the closest thought and study, you can well bestow upon them.

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For though they are addressed to God, and ought to be as remote as possible from all appearance of preaching to men; yet from the subjects, on which they turn, they will serve equally with your sermons, and perhaps still more effectually, to awaken in the minds of men a just sense of divine things; to give a becoming awe of the power and justice of God; and to excite an earnest desire of his approbation, an humble confidence in his goodness, and a lively hope of the accomplishment of his promises. In a word, they will teach sinners the evil of their doings; and convince the righteous of the excellency and advantage of a religious life, and so fill them with hope, and joy unspeakable. If you keep these ends constantly in view, and remove as far as possible all other considerations from your mind, any farther directions will, I apprehend, be quite superfluous.

I shall now proceed to a few particulars on the personal character of a minister.

Besides the necessary duties, to which he is obliged as a creature of God; there are some, which are peculiarly ornamental to his office, and contribute in a high degree to his

honour and success in its several functions.

That a minister of religion should himself be a good man, is so necessary, that, if he want this qualification, he is the meanest and most worthless of all mankind. How severe, yet just is the sarcasm! Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? How shall he speak of the truths of religion, who either disbelieves them, or, which is a yet more contemptible character, at the same time that he acknowledges them, violates their most sacred obligations? How shall he conduct his ministrations, so as to promote the best interests of his people, who has no sense of the worth of his own soul, or concern to work out its salvation? How shall he exhort them to repent of their sins, who is himself the slave of sin? With what propriety can he represent the worth and beauty of virtue, who has never had any experience of them? How shall he delineate the excellent character of Jesus, whilst his own is diametrically opposite to it? or how affect, and inflame the minds of others with a sense of his love, who calls sinners to repentance, when he has not himself accepted the invitation?

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But I will not, I ought not to suppose this, or any thing like this, of our brother, to whom I am now speaking. As a good man, Sir, it will be your great aim, desire and endeavour to approve your fidelity in the ministry, and to take every method in your power, which may conduce to your success in the work on which you have entered. You will not, I am persuaded, ever allow yourself in any of those immoralities, which the world in general condemns; you will never give any one occasion to say, that you neglect yourself the great rules of virtue, which you enforce upon others. But it seems desirable, that a minister of the christian religion should fix to himself a higher standard of morals, and that he have a mind more superior to present things, than the rest of mankind. I mean not, that he should renounce the sentiments of a man, or divest himself of those regards to his interest or fame, which are the great incitements to industry in the several occupations of life. It is however greatly to be wished, that he ever discovered a mind intent on higher things, than earth can furnish; and particularly that he have no such attachment to the riches, honours or pleasures of life, as would divert him from the duties of his office, or even interrupt

rupt him in them. If it can be truly said, that he is oppressed with the same low cares; that his breast swells with the same ambition; and that he is equally attached to the pleasures of life with the general part of mankind; it will, as a lessening of his character, be a prejudice to his usefulness also. But if a minister be not only a man of strict integrity, but of diffusive benevolence, and unaffected sanctity of manners; besides the usefulness of his example, it will reflect a peculiar lustre on all his ministrations, and contribute greatly to their success.

Our Saviour, speaking of the apostles, the first ministers of his religion, says; "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." A plain intimation to all, who come after them in the service of the gospel, that they should be very careful not to conform to the corrupt principles and practices of the age, in which they live. Not that I would wish to recommend to you, Sir, or to my other christian brethren, any singularity in your appearance or behaviour; much less a stiff, morose and austere carriage: this will never reflect any honour on your office; and it is well, if it have not in some instances
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created a prejudice against it. Never affect to depart from the opinions and usages of mankind, unless there be a visible necessity for it; but when you cannot copy them without passing the bounds of innocence, and transgressing the laws of our holy religion; then, and not till then, is it time to shew yourself singular. The plain language of such a conduct is, that you are a friend to chearfulness and innocent mirth; but that your principles oblige you to stop short, when you cannot comply with your companions without violating your conscience: and this behaviour, if manly, resolute and unaffected, will be no less instructive, perhaps much more so, than your best discourses.

With these guards, I will venture to recommend it to you, to take every method in your power to cultivate the esteem and affection of your people; and to shew by your whole behaviour, that you take great pleasure in their company, that you rejoice in their prosperity, and that you sympathize with them in their afflictions.

Shall I be thought too particular, Sir, if I put you in mind of the peculiar propriety of cultivating an acquaintance with the younger
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part of your society? It is on the rising generation, that the friends of virtue and religion chiefly turn their eyes: and they regulate their hopes and fears by their conduct and character. The labours of a christian minister will, for the same reason, be principally directed to their improvement; and, as he wishes to serve the cause of religion in the next as well as in the present age, he will use all his endeavours to engage them in its interests. Here, he knows, are his fairest prospects of success; and, whatever discouragements the prejudices and habits of those, who are more advanced, may throw in his way, with the young, he hopes to gain a fair hearing, and to obtain a favourable reception to the delineations of the virtuous character, which he holds up to their view. Thus he secures the esteem and countenance of all the friends of religion, and recommends himself to the particular affection of wise and pious parents. And if any thing can win over such as have a dislike to the ministerial character and office, it will be this affectionate concern for the interests of mankind through all succeeding generations. Let the children and youth of your congregation then be kept in view, in the composition and delivery of your sermons; and in your

your behaviour and converse in the several families which you visit.

Need I add, that the sicknesses or other afflictions, with which any of your people are visited will engage your particular notice? To express our tenderness for the afflicted is a duty so strongly urged by the sentiments of humanity, as well as by the principles of the christian religion, that it cannot escape your attention. And it will greatly influence your practice in this particular, to reflect, that this is the season, when the obligations of religion are most seriously considered; and the supports and comforts, which it supplies, most needed.

But I must not allow myself to descend in this manner to particular instances and situations. It may be expected possibly, that something be said on the ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's-supper, and on catechising: it is not unusual, on these occasions, to introduce some observations on domestic duties, and the behaviour of ministers to each other; but one general direction may easily include them all; and that is to consider, what method in any particular case will be most agree-

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able to the design of our ministrations; and what conduct will be most ornamental to the ministerial character.

If these rules, Sir, be seriously considered, and faithfully observed, it must be attended with the happiest consequences. You will have the sacred pleasure which arises from a sincere desire to do the duty which God requires; and be at all times animated with the hopes which it affords. And as often as you review the scenes, through which you have passed, you will have this for your rejoicing, the testimony of your conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have had your conversation in the world.

And if you have the success, with which such endeavours are usually attended, it will be happy for your congregation also. They will grow up in knowledge and holiness under your ministrations; will attend on your services with a view to their edification; and together with an unfeigned regard to you their minister, will experience an increasing affection to each other, and to all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity.

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The services of this day may be considered as a preface of these happy consequences. How agreeable must it be to every good man to look over this assembly, and to consider them as a number of christians met together, to acknowledge this our brother as their christian minister; to unite their addresses to heaven, that he may approve himself worthy of the office, which he has undertaken; and virtually to promise, that they will always treat him with that regard, which his office and character shall merit; that they will ever be ready to hear the truths of the gospel from his mouth; and that it shall be their constant care to fulfil its obligations!

This, I understand to be the meaning of this days transaction, on the part of the people; and in this view it must be an useful, as well as an agreeable service, to all who attend upon it.

The efficacy of all our purposes, the success of all our endeavours, my brethren and fellow-christians, depends on the assistance and blessing of the Almighty. And as it is upon this principle, that our brother, and you his people have desired our assistance in recommending

mending him to the grace of God; let it continue to be your practice and his to look up to God, from time to time, for his assistance in your respective duties. Thus will you be a wise, holy, exemplary society of christians; and he a prudent, faithful and successful minister.

I conclude this address to you, dear brother, in the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy. "Take heed to yourself, and your doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, you shall both save yourself, and those who hear you."

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